

2020

ANNUAL REPORT

YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM



Missouri Department
of Economic Development

YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM

REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY FOR 2020

The Youth Opportunities Program (YOP) is authorized to allocate up to \$6 million in tax credits per calendar year for projects that target Missouri's at-risk youth. However, no new projects were authorized for CY2020 due to budget concerns stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, the Department administered the CARES Act Nonprofit Relief & Recovery Grant which helped nonprofits provide critical COVID-19 response.

Since its inception in 1997, YOP has facilitated more than \$205 million in contributions for projects serving Missouri's most at-risk youth.

YOP primarily partners with non-profit organizations to fund programs for disadvantaged youth, teaming up to leverage private dollars instead of relying solely on public/government funding. These programs help youth break down barriers to a healthy, successful life and realize their potential as productive citizens. YOP acts as an incentive to provide this specialized programming for youth who would otherwise not have such opportunities.

YOP has established program outcomes as a means to measure and verify the program's impact throughout the state. Priority is given to projects with outcomes impacting one or more of the following six areas:

1. **Increase the number of at-risk youth that receive a high school diploma.**
2. **Increase the number of at-risk youth that receive a high school equivalency.**
3. **Increase the number of at-risk youth that remain in school, improve grades, and/or earn course credit(s) toward a diploma.**
4. **Reduce the number of at-risk youth committing crimes and violent acts.**
5. **Increase the number of at-risk youth that have completed an employment skills education and workforce development program.**
6. **Increase the number of highly capable nonprofits focusing their efforts on awareness, education, treatment, and reduction of opioid misuse to targeted audiences.**

Table 1.1 (next page) shows the amount of tax credits authorized, issued, and redeemed to date from each of the last three calendar year allocations. Taxpayers (donors) have the tax year in which they made a contribution plus five succeeding tax years to redeem their tax credits.

TABLE 1.1: TAX CREDIT UTILIZATION

	2018	2019	2020 ⁴
Credits Authorized To Date ¹	\$5,783,469	\$5,719,198	\$0
Credits Issued To Date ²	\$5,219,059	\$3,823,269	\$0
Credits Redeemed To Date ³	\$3,776,045	\$2,389,845	\$0

¹ Credits Authorized = Total Amount Authorized each calendar year minus recaptured, as of 12/31/2020.

² Credits Issued = Total Credits issued as of 12/31/2020 for the projects authorized in each calendar year.

³ Credits Redeemed = Total Credits that have been redeemed by contributing taxpayers as of 12/31/2020 for contributions made to projects authorized in each year.

⁴ Credits authorized for 2020 are 0 because no new projects were authorized due to budget concerns stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Typically, for projects approved in each calendar year, YOP reports on the number of youth expected to achieve outcomes in the following categories:

- **Earning a high school diploma or equivalency**
- **Earning school credits, improving academically, or increasing GPA**
- **Not committing crimes; completing violence prevention courses**
- **Abstaining from drug and alcohol use; completing prevention programs**
- **Completing life skills training; financial literacy; participating in mentoring**
- **Learning employment skills and/or placed in a job or internship**
- **Increasing knowledge in science, math, technology, or business**
- **Achieving other outcomes**

However, because no new YOP projects were approved during CY2020, there are no corresponding outcome numbers to be reported this year.

While no new projects were authorized for CY2020, previously authorized nonprofit organizations are successfully implementing projects to help at-risk youth become productive adults. Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Ozarks and St. Louis Internship Program are two such organizations successfully using YOP tax credits to cultivate new donors, increase reach and capacity, and contribute in a very real way to meet the needs of disadvantaged youth. The following summaries demonstrate the ways in which these agencies are making positive, lasting differences in the lives of Missouri's most at-risk youth.

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF THE OZARKS

Springfield, Mo

Who They Are

For over a century, Big Brothers Big Sisters has been helping change kids' perspectives and giving them the opportunity to reach their potential. As the nation's largest donor and volunteer supported mentoring network, Big Brothers Big Sisters' mission is to create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships to ignite the power and promise of youth.

In 1983, this community-based mentoring program came to Springfield with the establishment of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Ozarks (BBBSO) as an affiliate. In the years following, the organization has seen impressive growth. In 2000 a satellite office in Branson was added to serve Stone and Taney County children, and in 2009 BBBSO merged with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Jasper and Newton Counties. Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Ozarks has served more than 20,000 children in the past 35 years through its mentoring programs.

Who They Serve

BBBSO targets youth who are in need, including those living in single parent homes, growing up in poverty, and coping with parental incarceration. Among other risk factors common to the youth currently being served by BBBSO, 88% qualify for the school's free and reduced lunch program, 69% of families have a household income of less than \$20,000, and 25% of the children served have an incarcerated parent.

What They Do

BBBSO youth are more likely to: have delays in academic achievement, become involved in juvenile crime and the criminal justice system, and are more likely to experience child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, and crisis involving drug and/or alcohol abuse. BBBSO consistently has a list of youth waiting to be matched. Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Ozarks matches at-risk youth with adult role models in positive, one-to-one relationships that have been proven to: improve academic performance and self-esteem, deter substance abuse and violence, and improve relationships with adults and peers.



NICK'S STORY

When Nick (Little) was enrolled into Big Brothers Big Sisters, the staff were concerned it was going to be nearly impossible to find a mentor for him due to his history, behavior, and age. Tad (Big) was a high-ranking police officer, so he saw first-hand the need for children like Nick to have a positive male role model. After hearing Nick's story, with no hesitation, Tad was in. Nick was matched with Tad in 2012 and through the support and funding of YOP, this match remained together until Nick's graduation in 2020 and they still maintain regular contact.

Tad changed Nick's life. Below, in his own words, Nick explains:

"My name is Nick and my Big is Tad. There are a lot of things that make him special, like being a police officer and being willing to be a part of my life by spending some of his lunch breaks with me. On my birthdays, he takes me out for a birthday meal wherever I want to go (like Red Lobster). He has helped me through many issues, many of which he never knew about. Just him meeting me made me feel I was worth more than I thought I was.

Tad has really taught me a lot in the years he has been my Big. Like, he taught me that police officers weren't the bad guys like a lot of people think these days. He taught me that not all dads are abusive like my dad and that there are men out there that can be depended on to be there when they say they're going to be and do what they say they're going to do. Those are things I needed to learn so that I can be a good husband and father someday. His time around me has influenced me to join the Army Reserves. I didn't feel right that he was out there as a police officer risking his life for people like me. I wanted to give something back and I was able to complete my basic training and start my career. I'll be able to afford to go to college with the benefits I get from that so I can take classes in criminal justice so that I'll be able to become a police officer. To me Tad is a combination of a dad, a brother, and a friend.

I'm not sure how my life would be different if I had never met Tad, but I do know I wouldn't have the goals that I have. Tad has changed my life for the better. I don't think I would have ended up doing as good as I do in school. I was doing badly in school before I met him. He helped me see that there was another way. My life would be drastically different without him, and it would be for the worst. Tad has been one of the biggest impacts of my entire life. He has changed my life."

ST. LOUIS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

St. Louis, Mo

Who They Are

The St. Louis Internship Program (SLIP), founded in 1992, is a youth workforce development program that supports work readiness training and provides paid eight-week summer internships in professional environments, as well as college and career planning to St. Louis high school students in financial need.

Who They Serve

With the assistance of YOP tax credits, St. Louis Internship Program (SLIP) serves high school sophomores and juniors attending the 26 public, private charter, and parochial schools located in the city of St. Louis, with a 63% majority of attendees coming from public schools. Program attendees are approximately 70% female. To be eligible for the program, students must qualify for the federal free and reduced lunch program. They are almost entirely minority and come from challenging areas, involving high-crime, high-unemployment, and/or family abuse.

What They Do

The program develops social emotional resilience, personal confidence, and on-the-job skills designed to last a lifetime. Students must show they are learning and grasping the concepts being taught. Unfortunately, many students wrongfully have a low opinion of their potential and think their low skill set will not be accepted in our program. SLIP helps them to see growth and improvement through their individual progress. Building resilience is an integral part of the program as students set career goals and acquire skills they need to achieve those goals. Year-round college and career planning is supported by this project to give these students a brighter future.



MARY'S STORY

Mary was an applicant to the 2019 St. Louis Internship Program (SLIP). During her interview, SLIP orientation, and even through the beginning of training, she was shy, reserved, and quiet. She rarely raised her hand to answer questions or even ask clarifying questions. In her essay, she mentioned a desire to become an orthodontist and a passion to help people, in addition to wanting to help her family financially.

During training, they started to see a change in Mary. From a shy and reserved individual, she became a student who started to own the material being taught. During a mock interview component of training, many students displayed their lack of practice and performed poorly in the activity. The training facilitator encouraged students to practice with each other throughout the week. Out of 138 students in training, Mary was the only one who decided to take this to heart. She came to the SLIP office after school to practice interview skills with SLIP staff. It was then SLIP training facilitators saw a difference in Mary. She was no longer afraid to speak up and interact more freely with her peers and training facilitators. She became a better public speaker, and it was clear to see her critical thinking skills were improving.

Because of her exemplary improvement and performance during training, Mary was able to complete her internship at a prestigious hospital in St. Louis. One of her primary job duties involved calling local doctor's offices to confirm their contact information. Mary admitted she was scared to talk to people on the phone, but she also decided to fight those fears and she completed the project faster than the original timeline. Her supervisor stated that Mary started off shy, but "came out of her shell" and performed many value-added tasks in their department. As a result of her confidence, Mary requested to speak about her challenging yet positive experience with SLIP at the program's annual celebration. Here, she received an award to recognize her strong character and performance.

As a result of Mary's participation with SLIP, she was able to intern in the healthcare field and pursue her passion for helping people. She participated in the ACT Prep program, and was able to have ample practice and preparation time to take her ACT test. Mary also participated in the Missouri area college tour, and visited six potential college options. All of these activities have allowed Mary to gain self confidence in her skills and passions, and to have a clear pathway to her career.



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